

CLAIMS

1 1. A system for conducting and facilitating transactions in a commodity goods
2 marketplace or industry, comprising:

3 an auction site for conducting and facilitating transactions in a selected industry, the
4 auction site connected to a global computer network and accessible via a standard Web
5 browser, wherein the auction site enables private auctions;

6 a pre-qualifier for pre-qualifying users, wherein after successful pre-qualification, a
7 user is granted access to a private auction on the auction site;

8 a message notifying delivery component for automatically sending electronic
9 messages to users, the electronic messages notifying the users of information specific to an
10 auction, wherein time of day information is presented in a user's local time zone;

11 an auction representative interface for:
12 (1) posting an auction to the auction site by an authorized auction
13 representative,

14 (2) creating users,
15 (3) managing users, and
16 (4) initiating invitations to users to join a scheduled auction; and

17 a user interface for:
18 (1) selecting an auction on the auction site, where a list of auctions from
19 which a user selects an auction comprises auctions to which the user has been invited,
20 (2) bidding for an item in a selected auction, wherein a bid is valid if it
21 meets a pre-determined criteria, the predetermined criteria comprising a determination of
22 whether (a) the bid is made within a selected time interval, (b) a numerical difference

23 between the bid and a current winning bid is greater than a selected threshold, and (c) the
24 bidding user is authorized, and wherein only valid bids are accepted by the auction site;
25 (3) viewing previous bids in a selected auction, where for a viewed bid,
26 information used to identify the user who placed the viewed bid remains hidden to other
27 users, but is open to authorized auction representative personnel, and
28 (4) enabling a first user to “auto bid” during an auction, where an auto bid
29 allows the first user to specify a maximum bid above a current bid, and increases the first
30 user’s bid by a pre-specified minimum bid up to the specified maximum bid when a second
31 user outbids the first user,

32 wherein, if presented in the user interface, time of day information is presented
33 in a user’s local time zone.

1 2. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends an invitation to a user who has been selected as a bidder for
3 an auction when the auction is created, wherein the user is pre-qualified and created as a user
4 in the auction site prior to being selected as a bidder.

1 3. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends a reminder to selected bidders for an auction at a pre-
3 determined time prior to the auction open time.

1 4. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends a notice to a first bidder when the first bidder is outbid by a
3 second bidder.

1 5. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends a message to winning bidders, notifying the winning bidders
3 of the winning bids.

1 6. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein the message notifying delivery
2 component automatically sends a message to losing bidders, notifying the losing bidders of
3 the losing bids.

1 7. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein an auction representative posts the
2 auction via the auction representative interface and the message notifying delivery
3 component automatically sends a message to the posting auction representative identifying
4 winning bidders.

1 8. A system as recited in claim 2, wherein an auction is created with a review
2 feature, the review feature causing a review delay requiring interaction and review by an
3 auction representative before the message notifying delivery component automatically sends
4 a message to bidders with a status notification indicating whether a bidder has won or lost a
5 bid.

1 9. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a user is presented with a selection of
2 auctions for which the user is authorized and unauthorized auctions are not viewable by the
3 user, and wherein the user is identified by a username and password to determine
4 authorization levels.

1 10. A system as recited in claim 1, where a plurality of auctions are created for the
2 auction site, the plurality of auctions being segregated into distinct groups, wherein a user has
3 access to all auctions in an authorized group.

1 11. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a modifiable profile corresponds to
2 each user, the user being capable of modifying the corresponding profile via the user
3 interface.

1 12. A system as recited in claim 11, wherein the modifiable user profile identifies
2 a default time zone for the corresponding user.

1 13. A system as recited in claim 11, wherein a set of desired electronic messages
2 is selected by a user via the modifiable user profile.

1 14. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a history of winning and losing bids
2 by a user is viewable to the bidding user via the user interface.

1 15. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the user interface allows a user to
2 search the auction site for a selected auction.

1 16. A system as recited in claim 15, wherein search criteria for the auction search
2 comprises at least one item selected from the group consisting of: auction name, item name,
3 open time, close time, auction id, item id, and auction quantity.

1 17. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein bids identical in price are ranked first
2 based on quantity and then on time.

1 18. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein the user interface presents a list of bids
2 for an auction at a user selectable refresh rate.

1 19. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein a user with a winning bid selects a
2 location from which to ship the auctioned item.

1 20. A system as recited in claim 1, wherein an auction is created with a start time
2 and an end time, the end time being automatically extended by a pre-determined amount of
3 time when a user places a valid bid within a pre-determined amount of time immediately
4 prior to the scheduled end time.

1 21. A method for enabling transactions in a commodity goods marketplace or
2 industry, comprising:

3 posting, by an authorized user (auction representative), an auction to an auction site
4 for conducting and facilitating transactions in a selected industry, the auction site connected
5 to a global computer network and accessible via a standard Web browser, wherein the auction
6 site enables private auctions, and wherein posting further comprises scheduling the auction;
7 creating users, by an auction representative, on the auction site, each user being a
8 member of at least one group, wherein each group has access to at least one selected auction,
9 and wherein a user has access to auctions associated with a user's group, but does not have
10 access to auctions not associated with the user's group, and wherein users are for pre-
11 qualified before being granted access to a private auction on the auction site;;

12 managing users, by an auction representative, for adding, modifying and deleting
13 users from the auction site and selected auctions;
14 initiating invitations to users to join a scheduled auction; and
15 automatically notifying users of auction events by sending electronic messages to the
16 appropriate users, wherein time of day information in the message is presented in a user's
17 local time zone.

1 22. A method for conducting and facilitating transactions in a commodity goods
2 marketplace or industry, comprising:

3 posting, by an authorized user (auction representative), an auction to an auction site
4 for conducting and facilitating transactions in a selected industry, the auction site connected
5 to a global computer network and accessible via a standard Web browser, wherein the auction
6 site enables private auctions, and wherein posting further comprises scheduling the auction;
7 creating users, by an auction representative, on the auction site, each user being a
8 member of at least one group, wherein each group has access to at least one selected auction,
9 and wherein a user has access to auctions associated with a user's group, but does not have
10 access to auctions not associated with the user's group, and wherein users are for pre-
11 qualified before being granted access to a private auction on the auction site;;
12 managing users, by an auction representative, for adding, modifying and deleting
13 users from the auction site and selected auctions;
14 initiating invitations to users to join a scheduled auction;
15 automatically notifying users of auction events by sending electronic messages to the
16 appropriate users, wherein time of day information in the message is presented in a user's
17 local time zone;

18 selecting an auction on the auction site, by a bidding user (bidder) where a list of
19 auctions from which the bidder selects an auction comprises auctions to which the bidder has
20 been invited and granted access;

21 bidding for an item in a selected auction, by a bidder, wherein a bid is valid if it meets
22 a pre-determined criteria, the predetermined criteria comprising a determination of whether
23 (a) the bid is made within a selected time interval, (b) a numerical difference between the bid
24 and a current winning bid is greater than a selected threshold, and (c) the bidding user is
25 authorized, and wherein only valid bids are accepted by the auction site;

26 viewing previous bids in a selected auction, where for a viewed bid, information used
27 to identify a bidder who placed the viewed bid remains hidden to other bidders, but is open to
28 authorized auction representatives; and

29 enabling a first bidder to “auto bid” during an auction, where an auto bid allows the
30 first bidder to specify a maximum bid above a current bid, and increases the first bidder’s bid
31 by a pre-specified minimum bid up to the specified maximum bid when a second bidder
32 outbids the first bidder,

33 wherein, if presented to a bidder, time of day information is presented in the bidder’s
34 local time zone.

1 23. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein automatically notifying users sends
2 an invitation to a user who has been selected as a bidder for an auction when the auction is
3 created, wherein the user is pre-qualified and created as a user in the auction site prior to
4 being selected as a bidder.

1 24. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 reminder to selected bidders for an auction at a pre-determined time prior to the auction open
3 time.

1 25. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 notice to a first bidder when the first bidder is outbid by a second bidder.

1 26. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 message to winning bidders, notifying the winning bidders of the winning bids.

1 27. A system as recited in claim 23, wherein automatically notifying users sends a
2 message to losing bidders, notifying the losing bidders of the losing bids.

1 28. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein posting an auction is performed using
2 an auction representative interface and once posted, the auction representative interface
3 creating an event which triggers an automatic message for automatically notifying the posting
4 auction representative of winning bidders of the posted auction.

1 29. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising reviewing results of an
2 auction, by an auction representative, wherein if reviewing is enabled, automatically
3 notifying users of auction events is delayed until the reviewing is complete.

1 30. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein a bidder is presented with a selection
2 of auctions for which the bidder is authorized and unauthorized auctions are not viewable by

3 the bidder, and wherein the bidder is identified by a username and password to determine
4 authorization levels.

1 31. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein posting an auction is repeated for a
2 plurality of auctions, each of the plurality of auctions being segregated into distinct groups,
3 wherein a user has access to all auctions in an authorized group.

1 32. A system as recited in claim 22, wherein creating a user further comprises:
2 generating a modifiable profile corresponding to the user, the profile initially
3 containing default information relating to the user, the user being capable of modifying the
4 user's corresponding profile via a user interface.

1 33. A system as recited in claim 32, wherein the modifiable user profile identifies
2 a default time zone for the corresponding user.

1 34. A system as recited in claim 32, wherein a set of desired electronic messages
2 is selected by a user via the modifiable user profile.

1 35. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising viewing a history of
2 winning and losing bids, by a user, via a user interface.

1 36. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising searching for a selected
2 auction in the auction site via a user interface.

1 37. A system as recited in claim 36, wherein search criteria for the searching
2 comprises at least one item selected from the group consisting of: auction name, item name,
3 open time, close time, auction id, item id, and auction quantity.

1 38. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising ranking bids placed by
2 bidders, wherein bids identical in price are ranked first based on quantity and then on time.

1 39. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising selecting a refresh rate for
2 bidding screens, by a user, wherein a bidding screen presents a list of current and previous
3 bids in an auction.

1 40. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising selecting, by a winning
2 bidder, a location from which to ship the auctioned item.

1 41. A system as recited in claim 22, further comprising automatically extending a
2 pre-determined scheduled end time for an auction, by a pre-determined amount of time, when
3 a bidder places a valid bid within a pre-determined amount of time immediately prior to the
4 scheduled end time.